

Clarification of USDA's Position on Uruguayan Meat Imports to Puerto Rico

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to be vigilant in its efforts to prevent the introduction of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) into the United States and its territories. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is subject to the same strict import and inspection standards as the 50 United States in order to guard against such devastating foreign animal diseases as FMD.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has inspectors at ports of entry throughout the United States and its territories to monitor the importation of foreign agricultural commodities to ensure that they comply with Federal regulations. Any commodity that does not meet USDA's stringent requirements is refused entry and either re-exported or incinerated.

On May 24, 2001, a shipment of frozen beef arrived in Puerto Rico from Uruguay. The shipment was allowed entry to the United States (initially in Miami) because the shipment was produced in September of 2000, months before Uruguay suffered an outbreak of FMD.

It wasn't until April 25, 2001, that Uruguay confirmed two cases of the highly contagious disease. APHIS then placed a prohibition on all fresh (chilled or frozen) ruminant meat from Uruguay that was produced on or after April 2, 2001. Because the shipment in question was produced several months before that date, the beef is not at risk for carrying FMD and is therefore allowed entry to the United States in accordance with Federal regulations.

It is the goal of APHIS to safeguard U.S. agriculture against FMD, which exists on four of the seven continents. With the help of Federal regulations, public awareness, and the diligence of APHIS inspectors, the United States has been free of FMD since 1929.

For more information about FMD, visit the USDA Web site at www.usda.gov. For recorded traveler information call 1-866-SAFEGUARD.

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